

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-8 and 10-18 are all the claims pending in the application.

Claims 1, 3-8, 10-13, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly anticipated by Taoka et al., U.S. Patent Publication No. 2005-0213045 ("Taoka"). Claims 14 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Taoka, in view of Bierhuizen et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,839,095 ("Bierhuizen"). Claim 16 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Taoka, in view of Bierhuizen and Lambert, U.S. Patent No. 6,288,815 ("Lambert"). Claim 17 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Taoka, in view of Lambert.

In the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that Taoka is a prior art reference under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e). However, Applicants submit that Taoka is not a prior art reference with respect to the present Application.

The U.S. Publication date of Taoka (US 2005/0213045) is September 29, 2005, which is after the U.S. provisional filing date of the present Application (March 28, 2003). The PCT publication date of Taoka (WO 03/083573) is October 10, 2003, which is also after the U.S. provisional filing date of the present Application (March 28, 2003). Therefore, Taoka is not a prior art reference under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) or § 102(b). Because the Taoka reference was published in Japanese, the PCT filing date is not available as the §102(e) filing date of the reference. The U.S. National Stage entry date is the earliest filing date of Taoka under §102(e) and the U.S. National Stage entry date is May 10, 2005, which is after the U.S. filing date of the present Application. Therefore, Taoka is also not available as a prior art reference under §102(e).

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of claims 1, 3-8 and 10-18 be reconsidered and withdrawn.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

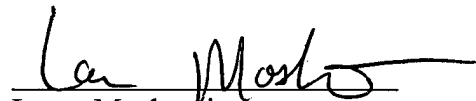
Respectfully submitted,

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